

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: All Design Review Board Members

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**SUBJECT: Water Emergency Transit Authority Central Bay Operations and Maintenance Facility,
City of Alameda, Alameda County**
(For Board consideration on January 6, 2014, First Pre-Application Review)

Project Summary

Project Applicant: Water Emergency Transit Authority and the City of Alameda

Project Representatives: Michael Gogherty, Senior Planner, Water Emergency Transit Authority;
Boris Dramov, ROMA Design Group.

Project Site. The proposed project is located on Hornet Avenue, near the intersection of Hornet Avenue and Ferry Point at Alameda Point, in the City of Alameda. The four-acre site was formerly part of the Naval Air Station and is currently owned by the City of Alameda. Approximately a one half-acre of the site is within the Commission's 100-foot shoreline band jurisdiction. Currently, approximately 25,500-square-feet of dilapidated docks are located in the Bay within and adjacent to the project site. The piles and some of the floating docks remain above water and are visible, but have deteriorated and unusable. This fill will be removed as part of the project.

There is currently no public access to the site, which is surrounded by fencing. The site is bounded on the west by a U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) facility secured by an eight-foot high fence. East of the site is a large shoreline park owned by the City of Alameda with trail rights-of-way held by the East Bay Regional Park District. The 326 linear feet of shoreline on the upland area of the site is protected by approximately 5,515 square feet of riprap and a retaining wall constructed of concrete and wood. The site ranges from approximately 77 feet to 85 feet wide from the Bay edge to Hornet Avenue

Proposed Project and Public Access. The project involves the construction of a maintenance and operations facility for the Water Emergency Transit Authority (WETA). The facility would service and maintain WETA's ferry operations in the Central Bay. The project would include a four story Central Bay Operations and Maintenance building with a 6,100-square-foot footprint, floating berthing facilities for 12 vessels, and a 13,500-square-foot yard area located between the building and the berthing facilities. The first floor of the building would include maintenance and engineering workshops that open onto the yard. The remaining floors of the building would be devoted to storage, dispatch operations, and administrative offices. The overall height of the building is 70 feet. The berthing facilities would include 14,452 square feet of floating docks and mooring facilities connected to a 500-square-foot pile-supported deck leading to the yard.



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A variety of activities would take place at the facility, including: refueling ferries, bilge and sewer pump-out, fluid replenishment, repair and replacement of vessel equipment, trash disposal, cleaning and painting of vessels, storage and replenishment of concessionary items for passenger consumption. The facility would provide a secure location to transfer cash from vessels to the building, where it would be stored on-site and removed by armored car. The yard would have two means of ingress and egress, allowing for large fuel trucks to access the underground fuel storage tanks, and a wide range of delivery vehicles to enter and exit the site. There would often be multiple vehicles on site.

The project applicant does not propose any public access on the site of the WETA facility. According to the project applicant, the building and the yard must be fenced and gated in order to provide security and public safety. There is expected to be continual activity at the site and the work proposed for the yard and workshops requires handling hazardous and flammable materials. Furthermore, the site is subject to federal maritime security regulations administered by the US Coast Guard. Although the yard and building must be secure, an eight-foot high metal vertical picket fence that allows for visibility of the operations will be provided along the eastern end of the yard adjacent to the public access and park area.

The project includes enhancing the adjacent park area owned by the City of Alameda. Currently, a 10-foot-wide Bay Trail segment extends along the shoreline east of the site, terminating at the site. WETA, in consultation with BCDC staff and Bay Trail staff, proposes to realign and extend the existing trail so that it better serves as a connection to the Hornet Museum and the existing public access areas through the MARAD site to the Seaplane Lagoon. Approximately 100 feet of 10-foot-wide (approximately 2,380 square feet) of the existing trail and connecting path would be removed and replaced with approximately 145 feet of new 10-foot wide trail and path. In addition, a new five-foot wide path would be constructed from the existing trail along the shoreline, turning inland along the eastern edge of the project site connect back to the trail at Hornet Avenue. New directional and interpretive signs would be provided describing the route of the Bay Trail beyond this area through the MARAD site and the unique environmental and scenic qualities of the waterfront setting.

In addition, a new 17-foot-wide extension of the Bay Trail would be constructed along the 289-foot northern length of the project site along Hornet Avenue. This portion of the trail would include a two-foot-wide landscaped area adjacent to the project site, 12 new street trees in three-foot by six-foot tree wells adjacent to a six-inch curb and an 11.5-foot pedestrian and bicycle trail. Beyond this area and through the Hornet and MARAD site, signage would indicate the route for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Approximately 6,850 square feet of the park would be landscaped between the realigned trail and the project site, including irrigated turf and low lush planting with a break in the landscaping provided to create "windows" into the work yard. Interpretative signage would describe the unique working waterfront activities. Nine trees in three clusters are proposed to better define the spatial qualities of the setting and to provide shade and visual interest. In addition, six benches are planned along the shoreline. Opposite the benches will be an interpretative sign describing the role and function of the WETA berthing facilities.

Bay Plan Policies. The *San Francisco Bay Plan's* policies on Public Access state that "[i]n addition to the public access to the Bay provided by waterfront parks, beaches, marinas, and fishing piers, maximum feasible access to and along the waterfront...should be provided in and through every new development...on the shoreline..." and that the public access improvements "...should be designed and built to encourage diverse Bay-related activities and movement to and along the shoreline..." The policies state that the *Public Access Design Guidelines* be used as a guide to siting and designing public access consistent with a proposed project. The Bay Plan policies on Appearance, Design and Scenic Views further state that "all bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay."

Board Advice. The Board's advice is sought on the following four issues and questions:

1. **Does the project provide adequate, usable and attractive public access?** The Board should advise on whether the size and configuration of the proposed public access will provide attractive and usable public access. The Board should also advise on whether the proposed public access amenities, such as seating and signage are appropriate or could be enhanced for visitors.
2. **Are the connections at either end of the proposed public access improvements sufficiently clear to lead the public to and along the shoreline?** The Board should advise on whether the proposed project provides clear and continuous transitions both to existing pathways along the MARAD site and Seaplane Lagoon, but also to potential future access planned by the City of Alameda north of the site (The City of Alameda's current plan envisions the Bay Trail aligned away from the shoreline and the MARAD ships).
3. **Is the path along the northern side of the building sufficiently wide to accommodate proposed uses?** The Board should advise on whether the proposed access along Hornet Avenue north of the building site is sufficiently wide considering the proposed landscaping, potential conflicts with employees exiting and entering the building, and the trucks that will be entering the driveways to access the Bay side of the building. Are there safety measures that could be employed to minimize potential conflicts?
4. **Can views of the Bay and the maintenance activities be enhanced from public access areas?** The Board should advise on whether the path alignment, proposed seating, fencing and landscaping are optimally sited to take advantage of the viewing opportunities afforded at the site.